



# consumer news

Office of Consumer Affairs  
Executive Office of the President · Virginia H. Knauer, Director

Vol. 1 No. 3, June 1971

## Summer '71: Agencies urge conservation of electric power

The President's Joint Board on Fuel Supply and Fuel Transport is calling on the public, industry and government to conserve energy generally and to reduce power use during peak periods this summer.

George A. Lincoln, Chairman of the joint board, said the board's *Survey of Electric Power Problems*, released last month by Office of Emergency Preparedness, notes that the power situation will be tight this summer. During extended and extremely hot periods, brownouts and selective blackouts may occur in high-energy use areas such as New York, Chicago and Washington. Federal Power Commission, nevertheless, reports that this summer's electric supply situation should be improved compared with summer of 1970. The most pronounced problems are those resulting from delays of power companies in placing new generating facilities in service on schedule and the continued growth of weather-related loads for air conditioners, dehumidifiers and fans.

The joint board's efforts will be through three broad programs:

- Public Conservation Program headed by Virginia Knauer, Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, with cooperation of U.S. agencies, including Environmental Protection Agency. The program will provide guidance to consumers for saving energy and money.
- Industrial Conservation Program headed by Maurice Stans, Secretary of Commerce. It will inform business and industry what kind of programs they may institute to conserve energy.
- Government Conservation Program headed by Anthony W. Innamorati, General Services Administration Assistant Commissioner for Buildings Management, with participation of other Federal agencies (including Defense Dept., National Aeronautics & Space Administration, Postal Service and Veterans Administration) to lower energy use in Federal buildings and facilities. Programs will be recommended to cities and states with acute power problems.

## Neighbor to neighbor

Other inner-city neighborhoods across the country may benefit from the first-hand experiences of Washington's Neighborhood Consumer Information Center, which is supported by private foundations and an Office of Economic Opportunity grant.

NCIC investigates and resolves problems of low-income consumers; prepares radio and TV consumer-education spots in consultation with Office of Consumer Affairs; runs its own complaint department; conducts classes, and operates a speakers bureau to inform citizens of their consumer rights and to explain unscrupulous business practices.

NCIC distributes information to other consumer groups about helping black and Spanish-speaking Americans, and it will assist neighborhood groups in developing consumer-assistance programs. The center's address is 3005 Georgia Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010.

## ICC says furniture must go through

Interstate Commerce Commission's Bureau of Operations has ruled against the practice of movers' charging storage fees on a consumer's household goods because a strike within the moving industry prevented delivery. Ruling 118 was made in response to complaints received from persons in the New York City area during a recent strike.

## FTC issues rules & proposals to aid consumers

Federal Trade Commission has issued two new trade regulation rules, and it is studying six others to regulate certain business practices to promote competition and protect consumer interests.

### • Retail food stores

Effective July 12, an FTC trade regulation rule requires that sufficient quantities of advertised food and grocery specials must be readily available in the advertisers' stores, and they must be sold at the advertised price or less. Some exceptions to the rule are demand exceeding the store's reasonable expectations and nondelivery of products beyond the store's control occurs. The commission announced that although the rule applies only to retail food stores, in future enforcement actions the commission will regard the legal principles inherent in the rule as applicable to advertising of other commodities.

### • Octane ratings

Effective Sept. 1, an FTC trade regulation rule requires the posting of octane ratings on gasoline pumps to help drivers in selecting the right gasoline for their cars. Originally, the effective date was June 28, but the commission postponed that date to allow time to reconsider the use of the research method of measuring octane value.

### • Proposed trade regulation rules

Public hearings have been held on six FTC proposals for trade regulation rules, and the FTC staff is preparing its reports for the five commissioners, who will study the pros and cons of the proposed rules. There is no timetable for staff reports to be given to the commissioners, nor is there a deadline for the commissioners to make decisions on adopting the rules as proposed or with modifications.

The following rules have been proposed:

**TEXTILES**—All textile products shall have a permanent label telling consumers how to wash, clean or generally care for the product.

**AUTOS**—The sticker price on new cars must be a realistic one within the actual range of prices at which cars are usually sold because of discounts or additional charges.

**POISONS**—Advertising claims for insecticides and pesticides must conform to product labels—claims cannot negate, exceed or contradict the information on labels, which must conform to **Environmental Protection Agency** standards.

**NEGATIVE OPTIONS**—Consumers will no longer have to notify a company (or "club" selling items such as books or records) not to send merchandise on a monthly basis; in order to get each month's "selected" item, buyers, or "club members," will have to mail an order requesting it.

**DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES**—Persons will be allowed a cooling-off period of three working days in which to change their minds about such sales contracts exceeding \$10.

**AMPLIFIERS**—Advertising of power output of home entertainment amplifiers (radios, record & tape players, component audio amplifiers and the like) must disclose (1) manufacturer's rated minimum sine wave continuous RMS (effective) output in watts per channel; (2) load impedance for which the manufacturer intends the equipment to be used; (3) rated power frequency response; (4) rated percentage of maximum total harmonic distortion at any level from zero watts to the rated power output.

### Conference to study consumer concerns of the aging

The first **White House Conference on Aging** in 10 years will meet in Washington the last week of November. Three-thousand participants are expected to discuss the major consumer problems of the estimated 20-million American who are 65 years and older: problems of health care (including nursing homes), transportation, income and housing. Dr. Arthur S. Flemming is chairman of the conference, which will be attended by delegates from aging conferences at state level and representatives of organizations such as National Council on the Aging, American Association of Retired Persons, Southern Christian Leadership Conference and labor unions.

## Trying to make sense out of a maze of consumer programs

How many ways does the Federal Government try to help consumers: A dozen? Two dozen?

The answer is more like 12 dozen. Virginia Knauer, Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs, has estimated that there are at least 150 Federal consumer-related programs.

Trying to coordinate these Federal consumer programs requires a systematic approach. Mrs. Knauer has established a Division of Program Analysis within OCA to undertake the necessary surveys and studies of consumer programs in Federal agencies and to evaluate them on a priority basis. Analyses will be used in making recommendations to Federal agencies about policy matters, the effectiveness of their programs and operations and the elimination of duplications.

Mrs. Knauer named Frank Marvin to be Director of Program Analysis. Marvin has a background in program analysis. Before joining OCA, he worked on human-resource problems in the Office of the Secretary of the Interior Dept.

## New regulations for auto tires

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration within Transportation Dept. has issued a new regulation on tire identification and record keeping.

Tires manufactured after May 22 must be marked with a 2-symbol manufacturer's code, and retreaded tires must be marked with a 3-symbol code. The regulation also requires manufacturers and retreaders to maintain the names and addresses of the first purchasers of these tires so they may be notified if the tires are defective.

Effective Jan. 1, 1972, a new Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard will require retreaded tires for passenger cars to have labeling and physical dimensions similar to new pneumatic passenger tires and to have identical standards for strength, endurance and high-speed performance and for preventing the collapse of a tire's rim-bearing section.

## Information centers aid consumers in 42 cities

General Services Administration operates Federal Information Centers to serve the public on the spot in 26 cities and by free long-distance telephone service in 16 other cities. The centers are staffed by personnel who are prepared to answer, or to get any answer to, any inquiry about Federal services, programs and publications. If a question or problem cannot be handled within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, information aides will suggest an appropriate state or local government agency.

Centers are in Albuquerque; Atlanta; Baltimore; Boston; Buffalo; Chicago; Cincinnati; Cleveland; Denver; Detroit; Fort Worth; Honolulu; Los Angeles; Kansas City; Los Angeles; Miami; Minneapolis; New Orleans; New York; Newark; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Portland, Ore.; St. Louis; San Diego; San Francisco, and Seattle.

Persons in the following cities may call the centers by dialing a local telephone number: Birmingham, Ala.; Colorado Springs & Pueblo, Colo.; Hartford, Conn.; Fort Lauderdale & West Palm Beach, Fla.; Topeka, Kan.; St. Joseph, Mo.; Omaha, Nebr.; Albany, N.Y.; Charlotte, N.C.; Scranton, Pa.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Austin, Houston & Waco, Tex.

Telephone numbers for centers in any of the above cities are listed in local directories under "U.S. Government." If not listed, ask information operator for assistance.

## New Federal publications

*11 Ways To Reduce Energy Consumption & Increase Comfort in Household Air Conditioning*, published by National Bureau of Standards and Office of Consumer Affairs; free from OCA.

*Consumer Bulletin No. 1: Mail Order Insurance*, published by Federal Trade Commission, 15¢.\*

*Survey of Electric Power Problems: Summer 1971*, published by the President's Joint Board on Fuel Supply & Fuel Transport; free from Office of Emergency Preparedness, 17th & F St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20504.

*Conserving the Nutritive Values in Foods*, revised, published by Agriculture Dept.'s Agriculture Research Service; 10¢.\*

\*Available at Government Printing Office Bookstores or by ordering from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402; make checks payable to Supt. of Documents.

## Speak up & be heard

President Nixon has said that "the buyer has the right to register his dissatisfaction, and have his complaint heard and weighed, when his interests are badly served." You may simply want to write to your Congressman or Senators, or you may want to get more involved. Some of the issues before Federal departments and agencies offer opportunities for submitting written comment or testifying. Because of differences in agency rules, you may want to write (or telephone if the agency has a field office in your city) for special instructions on how to submit comments or appear as a witness at a public hearing. Times, days and locations may change; confirm with the sponsoring office.

### • Canned peaches, pears & fruit cocktail

June 20 is deadline for filing comments on **Health, Education & Welfare Dept.'s** proposal that standards for canned peaches, canned pears and canned fruit cocktail be amended to provide for the use of "slightly sweetened fruit juices" as an option in packing; under the proposal the labels would have to state: "packed in slightly sweetened fruit juices from concentrate."\*\*

### • Children's TV programs

July 2 is the extended deadline for comments and August 2 for replies concerning **Federal Communications Commission's** inquiry into children's television programs along with advertising content and methods of presenting commercials.\*

### • Trucks & campers

July 6 is deadline for filing comments on **Transportation Dept.'s** proposed new motor vehicle safety standards to impose requirements on manufacturers of trucks, incomplete vehicles and campers to specify on a placard or in the owner's manual the recommended spatial limits for placement of the center of gravity of loads. The proposed requirements for campers would require each camper maker to determine to specified tolerances the gross camper weight and the center of gravity of the camper when loaded to gross camper weight; it would additionally require the maker to reproduce the placard in the owner's manual with a sketch or diagram of the camper indicating the weight and method of placement of the recommended load for each camper storage compartment.†

\*\*Write to Hearing Clerk, Health, Education & Welfare Dept., Room 6-62, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20852.

\*Write to Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 1919 M St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554. Refer to Docket 19142.

†Write to Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 4223, 400 7th St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20591. Refer to Docket No. 71-7. Notice 1. Ten copies requested.

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